



NEWS & NOTES

VOLUME XI / AUGUST, 2015

ACA Today

EMPLOYER-SPONSORED INSURANCE CONTINUES TO REMAIN STABLE UNDER THE ACA: FINDINGS FROM JUNE 2013 THROUGH MARCH 2015

Between 2000 and 2012, employer-sponsored insurance [ESI] coverage rates for nonelderly workers (ages 18 to 64) fell 11 percent. Among workers in firms with fewer than 50 employees, coverage rates fell 17 percent, from 61.1 percent to 52.4 percent. The subsidies provided by the ACA, along with the availability of Medicaid for most adults up to 138 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) in states that expanded Medicaid, may lead to changes in employer decisions to offer coverage and employee decisions to take up those offers. Similar to [earlier] findings published in Health Affairs, we continue to find no change in ESI offer rates, take-up rates, or overall ESI coverage under the ACA. ([Urban Institute](#))

EXCHANGE PLANS INCLUDE 34 PERCENT FEWER PROVIDERS THAN THE AVERAGE FOR COMMERCIAL PLANS

The new data quantifies anecdotal reports that exchange networks contain fewer providers than traditional commercial plans. Avalere examined the largest rating region in the top five states by 2015 exchange effectuated enrollment: Florida, California, Texas, Georgia, and North Carolina. In each of these rating regions, Avalere compared the average number of providers included, for each of the five provider types examined, in exchange networks compared to commercial networks in the same geographic area. ([Avalere](#))

SMALL BUSINESS INSURANCE EXCHANGES ARE OFF TO A ROCKY START

Only 10,700 employers are currently enrolled in coverage through the Small Business Health Options Program, or SHOP, exchanges, the federal government announced this month. That figure represents about 85,000 Americans, the government said. Officials did not provide a state-by-state breakdown. ([St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#))

BLUECROSS BLUESHIELD OF TEXAS TO DROP INDIVIDUAL PPO PLANS IN 2016

About 367,000 Texans will lose their individual health insurance policies next year when BlueCross BlueShield of Texas stops offering its Blue Choice PPO plans. The insurer said it would still offer an HMO plan in every county in the state. The change does not affect BlueCross Blue Shield of Texas PPO plans offered by employers. ([Washington Post](#))

PATIENT OUT-OF-POCKET COST INCREASED POST ACA

Patients' out-of-pocket costs have risen for most office-based visits following the implementation of the ACA, and the trend may lead patients to cut back on needed care, according to research published in Health Affairs. Most of the increase was in deductibles. The researchers determined that these rose an average of 9.5 percent for established patients and 7.9 percent for new patients. Copayments generally fell, while changes in coinsurance were a mix of small increases and decreases. ([Medpage Today](#))

**MLR LEGISLATION GETS
NEW LEGS IN THE SENATE**

The Senate revived its effort to separate broker commissions from a medical loss ratio formula created by the ACA. Senators Chris Coons (D-Del.) and Johnny Isakson (R-Ga.) introduced the “Access to Professional Health Insurance Advisors Act.”

The bill would clarify that agent compensation is not part of the MLR formula as enacted in the ACA. ([Employee Benefit News](#))

* Note: Excluding Agent-Broker commissions from the MLR, is outlined subject to seven specified criteria.

**IMPLEMENTING HEALTH REFORM: THE
FINAL PREVENTIVE
SERVICES REGULATIONS**

On July 10, 2015, the Departments of Labor, Treasury, and Health and Human Services, published final rules providing for accommodations for religious organizations and closely held for-profit corporations that object to covering contraceptives. ([Health Affairs](#))

**HOUSE EASILY VOTES TO REPEAL
TAX ON MEDICAL EQUIPMENT**

The House shrugged off a White House veto threat and voted Thursday [June 18] to repeal a tax that President Obama’s health care law imposed on medical equipment makers. ([Associated Press](#))

**REPORT: IRS CAN’T VERIFY WHO
QUALIFIES FOR OBAMACARE SUBSIDIES**

The IRS cannot verify whether everyone who receives an Obamacare subsidy qualifies for it because a critical form needed for cross-checking a taxpayer’s status has been delayed until next year. ([Newsmax](#))

**SUPREME COURT UPHOLDS OBAMA’S
HEALTH-LAW SUBSIDIES**

The case turned on whether the law’s wording allowed for federal subsidies to help lower-income Americans nationwide buy insurance. A contrary ruling could have stripped coverage from millions by making their plans too costly. ([USA Today](#))

**KING V. BURWELL IN REARVIEW,
EMPLOYER MANDATE TO DOMINATE**

The next bit of scrutiny on SCOTUScare is all about the workplace now that health insurance tax credits are securely in place. The jeopardy of tax credits overshadowed that employers have big changes ahead under the employer mandate of the ACA. ([Tennessean](#))

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